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Update on Executions in China
October 17, 1989

The pace of executions appears to have picked up significantly in late September, as it does every year before China's National Day, October 1. Annually, courts sentence a number of people to death in September as a warning to the populace to preserve order and security during the national holiday; this pattern is often repeated in January-February, prior to spring festival.

All of the known executions were imposed for crimes such as murder, rape, robbery, and assault. Although Chinese press accounts often use such politically charged terms as "rebellious and hostile elements" when identifying the accused, no cases of execution for political offenses have been reported.

--Consulate General Shenyang reports that nearly 50 executions have taken place during the past six weeks in Liaoning. At least 16 were sentenced to death in Changchun, Jilin, although no report was received of their executions.

--Agence France Presse reported recently that 10 convicted murderers and armed robbers were executed in Shanghai in late September. According to AFP, that brought to 72 the number of executions or death sentences reported in Chinese press during the previous fortnight. At least some of these undoubtedly overlap with the 50 executions reported by Congen Shenyang.

--During a recent trip to Chengdu, Sichuan, an INR analyst saw a public poster listing in detail the crimes of six individuals, with a big red check mark across the bottom of the poster. The analyst did not have time to read the poster or ascertain the crimes or sentences of the six, but it is common practice in China for the execution of those sentenced to death to be publicly signalled by such a red check.

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